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CUI BONO?

WRITTEN FOR THE SATURDAY EVENING POST.

Why are the roses dead which twined
Around the rustic porch?
Their fragrance lives in memory yet,
Although they blossomed no long ago.
Who can say, dear?

Why did the rippling sunshine fade,
Which rested bright upon the wall?
It quivered there a little space—
Then died away, and that was all.
Who can say, dear?

The room, love, will come again,
And for more fragrant will they seem!
Yes, sweet, they'll bloom for you and me
In the next golden summer-dream.
Even so, dear.

But time is fast—shall you and I
Through all the years unchanged remain?
And will the years but ever bring
But memories of some sweet old strain
Heard long ago?

Ever My Queen.

BY PIERCE EGAN.

"AUTHOR OF THE FLOWERS OF THE FLOOD,"
"VIOLET," OR, THE WORDS OF KING-
WOOD CHASE," "MARK JARRETT'S
DAISY," ETC.

CHAPTER III.

FOUND DROWNED.

It was only the work of a moment for the viscount to open the case and withdraw the pistols. Obstacles rarely stand in the way of those who recklessly determine on vengeance. As the sharp click of the bolt of the patent lock flying back struck his ear, he also caught the sound of a retreating foot-step, and he feared that in the increasing darkness Cleveland Dyrart intended to take flight, and so escape him.

He looked up quickly. The gloom had rapidly thickened; he could hardly distinguish the form which a minute previously had been only too distinct, and he cried out, sharply:

"Stand! You are not coward as well as villain!" Cleveland strode up to him, and in a tone of rage, suppressed with difficulty, with which was mingled intense hate, he said: "I am neither the one nor the other, as you shall know. You, man, brought with your mean gold, and with your unworthy and debasing machinations, the treasure which was the life of my life. Losing it, existence is a burden to me, and I intend to fling it away; but not until I have exacted some retribution. Unless my hatreds fail me, my hand will not rest until I have taken from you the price—poor and inadequate as it will be—of the gem of which you have robbed me—your life. The world is too small for you and me to co-exist in. If I leave this place to-night, it will be alone."

"Alone!" ejaculated Cleveland, sternly, with a scornful laugh.

"If you quit it a living, breathing man, I shall be ready for the mattock and spade."

"If my eye and hand fail me not—and I am in good practice, as I have already proved to-night—a grave in yonder ditch shall be your destiny a few minutes hence," responded the viscount, between his teeth.

"Choose your pistol."

"Are they loaded?" demanded Cleveland, coldly and calmly.

Again the viscount laughed scornfully.

"I was humored with a parcel of your tooth-picks, begging, occasionally, my pardon, Lady Hastings, long previous to my appearance here," he answered, contemptuously.

"I, therefore, loaded the pistols myself before setting out on this pleasing errand. On your account, I took special care that each had its bullet, and will not miss fire. Choose!"

"Give me one—it is immaterial which," rejoined Cleveland, with the same impassible tone. "In this matter, at least, I do not suspect your truth."

He took one of the pistols at random, and carefully examined the nipple of the lock to see that it was capped, and tried the trigger by a backward and forward movement of his thumb, with the same coolness he would have displayed had he been about to shoot at a target for a wager.

Apparently satisfied, he demanded—

"How many paces?"

"Eight—turn and fire!" answered the viscount, promptly.

"May fire," returned Cleveland, with a sneer: "we may miss at eight."

"Eight is my distance," rejoined the viscount, with decision. "I kill at eight."

"And I at five, eight, twelve, or fourteen," exclaimed Cleveland, in a tone of indifference, which enraged the viscount.

"However, eight be it, and may the Lord have mercy on your soul—I will not!" he added, in a low, deliberate, but terribly determined tone.

"I echo the sentiment, save that I substitute fate," replied the viscount. "One!" he called, loudly, as he commenced to pace, "two—three!" he added, as he strode quickly away.

At the seventh pace he suddenly halted, and shouted, with shrill eagerness—

"Hold! I cannot see you!"

Heavy masses of black clouds were speeding over the opening at the top of the circle of trees, and gray misty vapor was rolling in the dell, and filling it as with a fog. Objects at a comparatively small distance were completely shut out from view, and the space which separated the viscount and Cleveland was sufficient to render each invisible to the other.

"I am here!" cried Cleveland, in a loud tone.

"I am here!" echoed the shrill yet sweet voice of a woman.

The sound was followed by an elderly



THE VISCOUNT DISCARDS HIS DAUGHTER.

A sheet of blue lightning with startling suddenness lighted up the dell, and displayed every object within it with painful distinctness, and both Cleveland and the viscount saw a graceful, slim, girlish woman, whose every feature was clearly visible, standing only a few paces from them, clapping her hands.

Cleveland did not recognize her, but the viscount did, and he muttered—

"Death! Mad Lydia Marchmont!"

Then they were all enveloped in utter darkness, and a fearful crash of thunder stunned them, but not so completely as to prevent them hearing a wild, quivering, affrighted shriek from the poor mad creature, who had been standing near them, an intending spectator of the coming duel.

"What is that?" cried the viscount, hastily.

But he took two short paces more, noiselessly, in order to bring him to his "killing distance."

A look, oppressive stillness ensued. Not a leaf rustled or a branch creaked. An intense darkness, which prevented the antagonists tracing the slightest outline of each other, prevailed, and in spite of the courage of both men the situation had something awful in it.

Yet at a moment came a blinding glare of lightning, and revealed the pale, desperate faces and the dark forms of the rivals as vividly as if they had been standing in bright, white sunlight.

A flash and a report from both pistols at the same instant ensued, and then silence.

This was rapidly broken by a rushing noise, and a deluge of rain fell. For a lengthened period there was no other sound—nothing but the patter of heavy drops on the leaves of the trees and on the grassy dell. Not the flapping of a frightened night-bird—not the stealthy fall of a retreating footstep.

The storm passed away, and bright, glistering, colorless moonbeams darted into the dell, making the turfy carpet look as if it had been suddenly tinged with a hoar frost.

They fell on the waters of the fountain, making them sparkle and glitter as if they were fashioned of burnished silver, and they fell on the stone seat on which the viscount had beheld Cleveland sitting in pensive sadness when she entered the dell.

And they fell on the prone form of the viscount, Lady Hastings.

He lay stretched on his face, with his right hand extended, and still grasping his pistol.

He looked as though he were dead—as dead as if Cleveland's bullet had gone through his brain or his heart.

Yet, of a sudden, he moved, rolled over on his back, lay motionless there for a minute or more, until his eyelids unclosed, and his gaze rested on the soft, pallid blue sky, and the faint stars above him.

Slowly he raised himself to a sitting posture, pressed his temples with his hands, and peered round him.

He was alone.

He sprang to his feet, for he remembered all now. He passed his hands rapidly over his limbs to his smarting ear, and brought his hand away wet with ghastly blood.

A mere scratch, though it stung him, he murmured. "I am hit nowhere else; but I hit him—I hit him! I saw him spring into the air. He lies there somewhere. I cannot search for him. Let others find him."

He saw the dwelling-house lying open not far from him, and he crept rather than walked to it. He placed his pistol within it, shut down the lid, locked it, and put it under his arm.

"I have closed my account with him," he said, grimly; "no, for her."

He glanced furtively for the opening out of the dell, and discovering it, he hurried

toward it, without trusting himself to give a look right or left.

He gained the pathway leading down to the Stepping Stones, and descended it with rapidity. On reaching the brink of the river he was startled to see how the river had risen, and with what velocity it was rushing down the valley.

Especially at the Stepping Stones did it lash itself and break with fury, leaping up and washing over them, throwing spray right and left, and rendering what was not altogether a safe passage in the broad daylight a dangerous journey in the night-time, moonlight though it was.

At this point he became conscious that he was drenched to the skin. He readily conjectured that torrents of rain had fallen during the time he had lain senseless in the dell, and, therefore, it was easy to account for the swollen state of the river.

He was too excited to heed this circumstance, and he sprang on to the Stepping Stones, leaping from one to the other with an agile step, until his foot, as he sprang on to a stone scarcely visible above the racing stream, gave a violent slip, and in an instant he found himself submerged in deep water, being borne rapidly into yet deeper flood.

He was, however, a good swimmer, and having escaped death from the bullets of Cleveland Dyrart, he had no intention of surrendering his life in this fashion; so he promptly abandoned the drowning-care, allowing it to sink like a stone, while he struck out for the shore, and succeeded in landing at a shallow spot, where the river fringed his park.

Dripping like a Newfoundland dog, emerging from a flood in which he had been swimming for minutes, he hurried across the park, and cursed the moon for shining so brightly as to make him a distinctive object to be marked down, intercepted, and seized, perhaps, by his own gamekeeper.

But he was not seen. He gained a private entrance into one of the wings of Hastingsleigh Court, and entered it by the aid of master-key, and made his way to one of his dressing-rooms pertaining to a suite he did not very frequently use.

There was a strange, painful stillness reigning in the house, as if every one in it were dead, and he turned up flights of stairs and along deserted corridors almost with a feeling of terror, but he met no one.

He gained the room to which he had been directing his steps, and rapidly changed his attire. When he had resumed his normal appearance he directed his steps to an apartment in which he knew he should find his valet awaiting him.

In this he was not disappointed, for he found him fast asleep in an easy-chair. He examined himself in a cheval-glass, and assured himself that he bore no trace of his conflict with Cleveland Dyrart, or his battle with the flooded waters of the river.

Only his face was very white—deathly white and haggard, as if he had aged full ten years in those few hours.

With a smart dash on the valet's cheek with a light walking-stick which he carried—for he had donned hat, overcoat, and gloves, as if he had just returned from a visit—he made the man leap to his feet with a cry of pain, and a gesture as if he would hurl his smiter to the earth, but, on recognizing his master, he fell back with a mouth full of apologies for offering to resent an unneeded-for and cruel blow.

"Are the people who were here gone?" he asked.

"Yes, my lord," replied the man, venturing to apply his hand anxiously to the thin red streak on his cheek.

"All?" he demanded, eagerly.

"All; every one, my lord," rejoined the man. "A few expressed some intention of staying to see the man in a rubber—the Earl of Lonsdale, Lord Baggens, Sir Frederick Goldstone, Captain Carrington, and one or two more, my lord; but Lord Baggens suddenly proposed something which seemed to please the rest mightily, so they ordered their carriages and went away in a hurry."

The viscount missed a moment. Then

he said, slowly, as he peered at him under his eyebrows—

"Lady Hastingsleigh received in the concert-room, of course?"

The valet shook his head.

"I believe not, my lord," he replied.

"Why?" demanded the viscount, with uplifted eyebrows, as if it was an unheard-of thing to her guests.

"I do not know, my lord," he returned, with a peculiarly rigid arrangement of his features. "Her ladyship, I understand, did not appear at all after dinner."

"Understand? From whom, sister?" he asked, a little quickly.

"Nurse Marchmont, my lord," replied the valet, glancing at him beneath his eyelashes with a sinister expression.

The viscount made no further remark, but proceeded, with the aid of Lister, to retire for the night.

But not to sleep. Heaven! what a horrid night he passed. His brain was racked, his ear beat and throbbed where it had been scored by the bullet. There was blood in his eyes, on his hands, and a vision present incessantly of a dead man lying stark in a lone place, beneath dark trees and darker brushwood.

Yet worse, for it agonized, enraged him, frenzied him, more than all else that had happened. His overpowering belief that he had been disabused by Lady Hastingsleigh, tortured him beyond all powers of description. It is a strange curse upon those who love better than they love wisely, that they too readily convert a suspicion into a fact. The possibility that a wrong might have been committed has but too often been the ground-work of a conviction that it has been.

It was rather late in the day before he sprang up in the brain of both sexes there is not a very wide difference; but men, who, of the two, have the least grounds for an unfavorable judgment, are the first to believe that the worst has taken place—that the maiden who is slightly necessarily falls; yet this is by no means the fact.

The viscount, however, was as certain that he had been deceived as if he was in possession of the most damning proofs.

"Did he not remind her of her vows of love to him—of her passionate—aye, her passionate caresses? Did he not write those words to her, and did she not, after she had received them, go to the meeting he made for her—to repeat them? No doubt to repeat them? Did I not with my own ears hear her assure him that she did not love me, and would not—pshaw! She has trampled on my honor, and I will trail her in the dust, and—ah—her last! He is beyond further revenge. Let him lie where he is and rot. But for her—for her—"

How poor and inadequate all forms of retaliation that suggested themselves appeared to him.

It was rather late in the day before he attempted to proceed in any direction in which he would be likely to encounter Lady Hastingsleigh; but though almost instinctively he avoided her apartments, the breakfast-room, the sitting and reception-rooms, in any one of which he might accidentally encounter her, she was constantly in his eyes, beautiful, but white, and garmented like an angel—no, a specter!

He did not meet her—that he expected. He did not hear her name mentioned by one whom he encountered, or to whom he spoke, and the servants at Hastingsleigh Court were numerous, and that, in some undisturbed way, disquieted him, for there appeared, he knew not exactly why, something ominous in the absence of all mention of her name.

He wandered about like a troubled spirit until he entered the nursery, all unwittingly, which contained his little daughter, lovely as child-form and nature, could it, seemed, possibly be.

It contained, too, Nurse Marchmont, who turned her pale face and glittering eyes to him as he entered, and she smiled the moment she observed his was features.

She advanced to him, but at the same moment, the beautiful little child saw him,

and springing to her feet, ran with outstretched arms toward him, uttering a cry of joy, and calling him her "Dear, dear, dear papa."

He recoiled from her as if she were a leper, and he cried as terrified people cry at sudden contact with one smitten with a fatal disease.

"Take her away—take the cursed reptile away—fing her out of my sight, or I shall kill her with a blow!" he almost screamed.

The child looked up at him with her large, tender blue eyes, as he made a repelling gesture to her, with amazement, and then, shrinking up to the nurse's side, hid her face in her dress and sobbed piteously.

"Do not speak so harshly, my lord, to the lovely little pet. She is afraid of your lordship's anger, and I am sure she is too great a treasure to you for you to think for a moment of giving her pain."

The viscount apostrophized the little trembling girl with an oath common on race grounds, but sadly out of place beneath that roof, and in the hearing of that pure, innocent child. Nurse Marchmont, with a scarcely concealed smile, responded—

"Oh, my lord! I am sure you do not mean it," and added, hastily, "Will your lordship please to tell me where to find my lady; I wish to consult with her concerning Lady Hastings here."

"I have not seen her," he returned, haughtily. That was a falsehood—"I have not spoken with her since dinner yesterday"—that was truth. "Doubtless you will find her in her boudoir—possibly writing an answer to the letter she received yesterday."

He turned away, muttering the last words to himself rather than speaking them aloud.

"I have been to my lady's suite three or four times this morning," rejoined the nurse, looking steadfastly at him, with a penetration that was offensive to him, but without seeing her. Indeed, my lord, I am afraid her ladyship's own maid has not seen her since she left the Court last night."

He started, a memory flashed through his brain.

"Ha!" he ejaculated; "by the way, Fairfield mentioned that she went away on a visit of consolation to—your sister."

He tried to laugh, but the smile was stifled in his birth, for it was met by a disturbing expression on Nurse Marchmont's face.

"My lady went from here on no such errand, my lord, and Heaven knows it," she returned, with an indignant sternness.

"I think it will be quite as well if you let my poor sister's name rest unspeakable. It is not for you to cast a gibe at her."

"I beg her pardon—I beg her pardon," he exclaimed, hastily. "It did not mean—"

"Let it go, my lord; it must be borne, I suppose, as other bitter trials have had to be borne," interrupted the nurse. "but I am growing frightened at the absence of my lady. I saw her cross the Stepping Stones last night."

"You?" he interrupted, sharply.

"I told you so last night, my lord," she continued, quickly. "I saw her shadow as it flitted over the waters. I could not be mistaken in it. I do not think, from all I can learn, that her ladyship has returned since. There was an awful thunder and rain storm last night; I hope nothing serious has happened to my lady."

He remembered instantly his own passage over the Stepping Stones. In the uncertain light he had had a narrow escape, and they might have proved fatal to her.

"Great Heaven!" he thought, "if she has been drowned!"

He walked to the window to conceal the turbulence of his emotions.

"I shall be rid of both in that case," he flashed through his mind, and he caught at the idea with avidity. He glanced at the little shrinking fairy, still clinging to the nurse's dress. "The rest will be easy enough," he muttered.

He returned to Marchmont, and was about to cast an unworthy reflection on the

absence of the countess; but he checked himself—his breeding, at least, did that for him—and he said, in a quieter tone, but without doubting her—

"I have no doubt that Lady Hastingsleigh, alarmed by the storm, sought shelter at Altrincham Park, which is not far from the Stepping Stones upon the opposite side. Her ladyship will be here in an hour or two, I have no doubt."

But she did not appear in an hour or two, or even that day or the next.

Nurse Marchmont, who she found that Lady Hastingsleigh did not return home, was greatly annoyed in her mind, and on the night of the second day she stood at her old post at the nursery window, watching as if she expected to see her ladyship, in the gloom of twilight, like a guilty spirit, stealing back to Hastingsleigh Court; but she came not.

Nurse Marchmont gnawed her knuckles and her finger tips.

"What can have happened?" she mused, anxiously. "Something shocking, something dreadful, I am sure. The servants are whispering, and all sorts of rumors are beginning to circulate. I am sick at heart—so bitter sick—for I believe she is dead—drowned at the Stepping Stones—slipped in the darkness, and carried away to death. If she had been, as I know it, I am sure of that. Lord! Lord! what is coming? If Lord—poor Lord—were not crazed, she might yet be Lady Hastingsleigh, for I am sure he is fond of her still, and we should know better how to manage him now. I will go to Lord. A sudden shock sometimes brings mad people back to reason. It may be her—I'll try it—I know so well what to say to make her heart leap into her mouth. Ay, I'll do it!"

Whether she carried her project into execution she kept concealed within her own breast; but for several hours each day she absented herself from her duties at Hastingsleigh Court, although, to do the women justice, she devoted the rest of her time to the closest attention to her beautiful young charge, who so suddenly appeared to be abandoned by both parents.

A week elapsed—a long, horrible week—and no tidings of the viscount were received. The viscount, strangely it seemed, kept himself confined to his own chamber, and from what fell two or three times from the lips of the valet, each night drank to excess, so as to be placed insensible on his bed. Inquiries, however, were instituted in all directions for Lady Hastingsleigh, but without avail.

On the following Sunday the viscount had risen late, after a midnight solitary debauch, and stood at his window with inflamed eyes and a racing brain, staring in the direction of the Stepping Stones.

Although he had not a hazy notion of the inanimate landscape, he tried to drown thought by gazing at the masses of foliage and long stretches of beautiful evergreen-ward. Suddenly he became conscious that there was a moving mass of persons advancing from the neighborhood of the river toward the house, and that they appeared to march in a kind of slow and solemn procession.

What did it mean?

He felt a dull blow on his heart, and for a moment staggered back, for too busy surmises and visions rose up before his blood-shot eyes.

Had the body of Cleveland Dyrart been unknelt, and were they bringing the corpse to the house to charge him with the murder?

He instantly resolved to take horse and flee away, he knew not where, and turning round behind him he beheld a man in a dark coat, with a grim, solemn, troubled countenance.

By an almost superhuman effort he controlled his terrible inward emotion, and assuming a cold, haughty, indignant air, he exclaimed—

"What is the meaning of that irruption of clock-hoppers yonder? Why are they making for the house?"

"They—they are the bearers of most mournful—most dreadful tidings," stammered the man, who looked exceedingly shocked.

The viscount involuntarily repeated the last three words.

"My lady—my poor lady!" ejaculated the valet, compressing his hands together, and bending his head down.

The viscount tried once, twice, thrice to speak, but the words died in his throat. He looked as if he were suffocating. At length, gripping Lister by the arm so tightly that the man winced with pain, he forced out, hoarsely—

"Tell me the worst at a word!"

"The viscountess, my lord, has been found—drowned in the Earl's Pool!" shrieked rather than spoke the man.

The viscount pressed his hands to his temples, gasped once or twice, and then fell back on the ground as if he had been smitten down with a club.

CHAPTER IV.

THE END OF THE BEGINNING.

Alas! it was but too true—the viscountess Hastingsleigh had been found drowned. Soon after the congregation had left the church on the opposite side of the river, a young farmer's laborer, betrothed to a darymaid belonging to the viscount's household, was making his way toward the Stepping Stones, to enter the park, when on passing a stretch of deep water in the river, called the Earl's Pool, from the circumstance that, some hundred years or more back, tradition said, a young earl had there drowned himself for love, he observed something which instantly riveted his attention.

It was not the broad water-lilies, blooming so beautifully, like clusters of snow on the green-brained leaves, nor the spike-shaped blossoms of the sedges, which attracted his eyes; but, to his fright, it was

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